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EVANS

SONNETS ON THE
DEATH OF THE DUKE
OF WELLINGTON

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Sonnets on the Death
OF THE
DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

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2
Sonnets on the Death

OF THE

DUKE OF WELLINGTON.

1
BY SEBASTIAN EVANS.
—

Σμικρά μὲν τὰδ', ἀλλ' ὅμως
"Ἄχω, δὲς αὐτῷ.

SOPH. ELECT.

Cambridge
MACMILLAN AND Co.

1852

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C. K. OGDEN

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I.

WEEP ye, and mourn! our last great man is gone!
Gone from the camp and council!—nevermore
Dwelleth with men the man we loved of yore!
Go softly! brothers, are we not alone,

Walking a night all rayless?—he that shone
The lodestar of our England, and before
Our faltering feet shed holy light and lore,
Hath fled our skies, and left his sphere to none!

Weep ye and mourn, palace, and hall, and cot!
Did he not live among us as a part

Of hearth and home, and his familiar fame

Fill all the rushing pulses of the heart

With pride that we too bore a Briton's name?

—O claim no kindred, ye who mourn him not!

II.

Is grief, then, selfish all? and that dear head
But mourned for our own loss? he walketh now
Among his brethren of old time, his brow
Shaded with other laurels, never red,—

Soul unto soul conversing, as they tread
The crystal floor of heaven, or kneel to bow
Before the eternal Mercy-seat.—Ah, how
Shall the frail Living dare lament the Dead?

Peace! will ye mar the holiness of grief?
Still let him rest beneath his quiet pall!
Yet know ye not how He who died for all,
True God, yet clad in true Humanity,
Even though He knew the lost one's slumber brief,
Wept over him He loved in Bethany?

III.

WHAT boots it now in feeble phrase and new
The deeds, the wars we felt not, to record?
Far worthier hands have twined around his sword
The leaves that die not;—whether in red dew

He planted Orient greatness; or o'erthrew
On many a Spanish height and crimsoned ford
The legioned vassals of the Lie abhorred;
Or pierced its hideous bulk on Waterloo.

Our life is new. The chords are faint we smite
From Elder Time. That Empire of Unright,
The spawn of anarchy and godless years,

Hatched in the refuse of an ebbing faith,
Hath done its destined work, and died its death,
Bequeathing other hopes and other fears.

IV.

To us, methinks, those deeds long passed away,
Show like the banks of cloud at eventide,
Those shadowy towers and towns, whose purple pride,
'Mid seas of amber, looms in long array

Above the sunset of a troubled day,
Telling of storms o'erpast, that far and wide
Shook hail and levin from their wings, and hied
Athwart the noon with darkness and dismay.—

Our fathers bore the tempest:—we, who seem
Children of evening, watch the tranquil skies.

Our sire's experience sounds but as a dream

Of things and deeds we cannot understand:
Yet, though we mark it not, even now may rise
That other cloud, no bigger than a hand.

V.

And who shall brave that tempest? Must we say
The last great man hath perished,—that the land
Is shorn of all her strength?—O friends, we stand
Even now girt round with feller foes than they

Our hero quelled,—men clamorous for sway,
Yet slaves of gold and lust, a loathly band,
Bred in the rottenness of states.—A hand
Higher even than his, is wanted here this day.—

Freedom and People, holy words, and dear!
How have they dared to desecrate your name,
Blind leaders of a blinder multitude,

Seeking your altars in the fanes of Shame!—
Prate ye of pure democracy?—'Tis here,
Here in a noble life, and SELF subdued!

VI.

YET walk we not all hopeless:—and the dream
That haunts the troubled slumber of the State,
Of prosperous peace, and golden years that wait
Even at the portal, yearning now to teem

A race of monarchs in the land, may seem
No idle vision,—though the Good and Great
Be not the children of our Wealth, nor date
Their glory from the Lightning and the Steam.

Are these thy gods, O England?—Dost thou hope
To teach true manhood by mechanic lore?

—By yon electric links from shore to shore?

—Yon powers that pant along the clanking groove?

—I ween our destined kings are they who cope
Boldly with duty,—strong in faith and love.

VII.

SUCH was the man we mourn, whose noble soul
Was lord alike of Kaiser and of clown,
Above the smiles of Fortune, or her frown,
Controlling others by his own control.

Long shall the years record it as they roll,
The brighter centre of a bright renown,—
That, lordlier far than they who wore the crown,
He served his king, and kept his duty whole.

O ye, who praise the knighthood of the past,
Lo here the sole true chivalry! And ye
Who on the phantoms of the future cast

Your gaze, and prophesy smooth things, turn thence,
And learn of him the secret of the free,
Whose freedom dwells in true obedience!

VIII.

A THOUSAND fell beside him, and the sod
Lay heaped with corpses round his single life ;
Yet scathless still, as fearless, 'mid the strife,
Where deaths in myriads darkened noon, he trod.

Ay, and when nations waited on his nod,
And girt his path with perilous greatness,—rife
With traitor's bullet, and assassin's knife,
No harm came nigh the favoured of his God.—

O proof of love and mercy! Who shall dare
Say yet our faith is dead, our glory told?
Is there not hope for England, when her prayer
Could set his foot upon the foeman's neck,
Even as the wand that Moses raised of old,
When righteous Joshua fought with Amalek?

IX.

HE died among his kindred, on his bed :

Prince, warrior, statesman. Shall I chant his praise ?

Alas, the labours of a thousand lays

Were weak beside the loving voice that said

O'er the cold clay, "Our good old Duke is dead !"

Our GOOD old Duke ! How coronets and bays

Pale at that inborn worth, whose gentle blaze

Sat like a glory on his calm grey head !

Here dwelt the man's true greatness.—Pause awhile

On that old moral of the schoolboy's theme,

Of Fame, and things that are not as they seem :—

What, will ye rank with him who lies beneath,

Yon Conqueror, captive on a narrow isle,

Babbling of Empire in the grasp of Death ?

X.

Go! bear him forth, the generous and the just,
With all the symbolled artifice of woe,
With car and pageant, pomp and blazoned show!
These are no common gauds of dust to dust;

'Tis a whole glorious Æon that ye trust
To the grey Past with him who lieth low!
This day with chant, and funeral march we go
From out the Old. Beneath our hero's bust,

We stand upon the threshold of the New!
Even now the portals open, and the dim
Aisles echo as we tread;—the seers are pale

With a strange awe, hushing their choral hymn
To whisper, gazing on the unlifted veil,
“Brothers, is THIS the temple of the True?”

XI.

THEY come ! with brazen dirges o'er the dead,
With thundery rolling of the muffled drum,
With tramp, and clash, and clattering hoofs, they come,
Through cloven seas like Israel:—but their tread
Is as the tread of triumph ;—they have shed
Their natural tears ere now, and grief is dumb ;
Nor mingles mourning with the reverent hum
Of yon thick millions for their Hero fled.—

The pomp is past—soldier, and sage, and peer,
Herald and prince, with staff, and cross, and star,
And sword, and golden symbol,—marching slow
Beneath their banners:—and the trophied car
Bears on the unheeding Victor. Ye may hear
Afar the drum beat, and the trumpet blow.

XII.

SADLY and slowly let the pageant sweep
Along the dim cathedral: humbly there
Let herald's voice his earthly name declare,
And the low dirge its solemn pauses keep:

Lay him beside his brother of the Deep,
The greatest with the greatest, while the prayer
Falls calm and sweet upon the troubled air,
With words of hope,—they perish not, but sleep.—

There let the warrior rest, the good fight fought,
Where the great City bows her stubborn knees
Before our God. THAT dust beneath her feet

Shall quicken faith, and lift her dullard thought,
Through human change and chances, to the seat
Of Him who gives the triumph and the peace.

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